

“Digital Transformation in Customer Experience Management: The Role of Phygital Marketing in the Real Estate Sector”



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Abstract

The real estate sector is experiencing significant digital transformation, leading to a fundamental shift in Customer Experience Management (CEM). Increasingly informed and digitally connected customers now expect seamless integration between online and offline interactions throughout the property purchase journey. This study examines the role of phygital marketing, defined as the strategic convergence of digital technologies and physical touchpoints, in enhancing customer experience within the real estate sector. The paper investigates how digital tools such as virtual property tours, augmented reality, customer relationship management systems, and social media platforms complement traditional, face-to-face interactions to influence customer engagement, trust, and purchase intentions. Drawing on an extensive review of existing literature and industry practices, the study identifies key drivers, strategic applications, and implementation challenges associated with phygital marketing adoption. The findings indicate that well-designed phygital strategies improve personalization, transparency, and experiential value, thereby strengthening customer satisfaction and relationship quality. The study contributes to marketing and real estate literature by providing a structured understanding of the linkage between digital transformation, phygital marketing, and customer experience outcomes, offering actionable insights for

Keywords:- Customer Experience Management (CEM), Real Estate Sector, Marketing

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The real estate sector is experiencing accelerated digital transformation significantly altering how customers search, evaluate, and finalize property purchase decisions. Digitally connected consumers—particularly millennials and Generation Z—expect seamless, transparent, and experience-driven interactions across online and offline touchpoints. Technologies such as virtual property tours, social media platforms, AI-enabled communication, and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems have enhanced engagement and accessibility. However, these digital tools often operate independently of physical interactions such as site visits and in-person consultations, leading to fragmented customer journeys. In high-involvement purchase contexts like real estate, such fragmentation weakens Customer Experience Management (CEM), reduces trust, and limits purchase intention. Phygital marketing has emerged as a strategic approach integrating digital and physical touchpoints to create cohesive and immersive customer experiences.

1.2 Research Gap

While digital transformation and Omni channel marketing have been extensively studied in retail and service sectors, limited empirical research

examines integrated phygital marketing strategies within high-risk and trust-intensive industries such as real estate. Existing studies largely analyze digital engagement, CRM effectiveness, or customer experience constructs independently, without developing a unified structural framework. Moreover, insufficient empirical evidence exists regarding the mediating roles of customer experience and trust in influencing purchase intention within urban real estate markets. This gap highlights the need for a comprehensive structural investigation in the Indian context.

1.3 Problem Statement

Despite increasing investments in digital technologies, the real estate sector continues to experience fragmented customer journeys due to inadequate integration between digital platforms and physical interactions. This discontinuity restricts effective Customer Experience Management, weakens trust formation, and reduces behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention and decision confidence. There is limited empirical evidence examining how integrated phygital marketing dimensions collectively influence customer experience and behavioral responses in the Indian urban real estate market.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the impact of integrated phygital marketing dimensions—digital immersion, Omni channel integration, and CRM-driven personalization—on Customer Experience Management (CEM) in the real estate sector.
2. To analyze the mediating effects of customer experience and trust in the relationship between phygital marketing strategies and purchase intention in high-involvement real estate decisions.
3. To develop and empirically validate a structural model linking digital transformation-enabled phygital strategies with behavioral outcomes in the Indian urban real estate market.

1.5 Research Hypotheses

H01: Integrated phygital marketing dimensions have no significant impact on Customer Experience Management.

H1: Integrated phygital marketing dimensions have a significant positive impact on Customer Experience Management.

H02: Customer experience and trust do not mediate the relationship between phygital marketing strategies and purchase intention.

H2: Customer experience and trust significantly mediate the relationship between phygital marketing strategies and purchase intention.

H03: Digital transformation-enabled phygital strategies have no significant effect on behavioral outcomes (purchase intention and decision confidence).

H3: Digital transformation-enabled phygital strategies have a significant positive effect on behavioral outcomes in the Indian urban real estate market.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on urban residential real estate customers in India who have interacted with both digital and physical touchpoints during their property evaluation process. The research examines integrated phygital marketing strategies adopted in metropolitan contexts and analyzes their influence on customer perceptions, trust formation, and behavioral intentions. The study excludes commercial real estate and firm-level financial performance indicators.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digital Transformation as a Strategic Reconfiguration of Customer Experience

Digital transformation has evolved beyond mere technology adoption to represent a strategic reconfiguration of value creation and customer engagement processes. According to Verhoef et al. (2021), digital transformation reshapes firm–customer interactions by embedding digital technologies within business models, operational systems, and customer journeys. This

transformation influences not only efficiency but also experiential value creation.

In high-involvement industries such as real estate, digital transformation extends beyond information accessibility to impact trust formation, perceived transparency, and experiential evaluation. The complexity and financial magnitude of property transactions make customer journey integration especially critical.

Customer Experience Management (CEM) is conceptualized by Lemon and Verhoef (2016) as the holistic management of customer touchpoints across pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages. Their framework highlights the importance of Omni channel consistency and seamless interaction continuity in shaping positive experiential outcomes. Similarly, Payne, Peltier, and Barger (2017) argue that while digital connectivity enhances engagement and co-creation, fragmented channel integration may negatively affect relationship quality.

Within the real estate sector, digital transformation has introduced virtual property tours, AI-enabled chatbots, CRM platforms, and online property marketplaces (Naeem, Rana, & Nasir, 2023). However, existing literature suggests that isolated technological adoption does not automatically enhance customer experience. Instead, value emerges when digital tools are strategically integrated with relational and physical engagement processes. Thus, structured integration—not standalone digitization—forms the foundation of effective CEM.

2.2 Phygital Marketing: Conceptual Foundations and Strategic Dimensions

The concept of phygital marketing refers to the convergence of digital technologies and physical touchpoints to create immersive, unified customer journeys. Originating within omnichannel retail research (Rigby, 2011; Grewal et al., 2017), phygital strategies emphasize synchronized online–offline experiences to enhance engagement and loyalty.

Omnichannel integration theory proposes that customer value increases when transitions between digital and physical channels are seamless (Verhoef, Kannan, & Inman, 2015). Beck and Rygl (2015) further assert that harmonized channel systems strengthen relational continuity and reduce customer uncertainty. In high-value purchase environments, such integration is particularly significant in minimizing cognitive dissonance and perceived risk.

Digital immersion technologies—including augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), and interactive simulations—enhance experiential richness and mental imagery (Hilken et al., 2017). In real estate contexts, immersive visualization tools allow prospective buyers to evaluate spatial layouts

remotely, thereby reducing information asymmetry and increasing confidence prior to site visits.

CRM-driven personalization represents another critical dimension of phygital marketing. Payne and Frow (2017) argue that data-driven customization improves communication relevance and fosters trust by aligning engagement with individual preferences. CRM systems enable behavioral tracking, predictive analytics, and targeted follow-ups—capabilities that are particularly important in complex and high-involvement purchase decisions. Despite growing conceptual clarity, empirical integration of these three dimensions—digital immersion, omnichannel integration, and CRM personalization—remains limited in real estate research, especially within emerging urban markets such as India.

2.3 Customer Experience and Trust as Mediating Mechanisms

Customer experience and trust are widely recognized as central mediating constructs in digital marketing literature. The Communication and Persuasion: Central and Peripheral Routes to Attitude Change proposes that in high-involvement decisions, consumers rely on central information processing routes emphasizing credibility, argument quality, and detailed evaluation. Given the financial and emotional stakes involved in property purchases, trust formation becomes a decisive psychological mechanism.

The Commitment-Trust Theory of Relationship Marketing identifies trust as a foundational determinant of long-term relational exchange. In digital environments, trust is shaped by transparency, personalization, perceived authenticity, and technological reliability (Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub, 2003).

Research in omnichannel retail contexts demonstrates that integrated digital–physical experiences enhance perceived control, satisfaction, and purchase intention (Juaneda-Ayensa, Mosquera, & Sierra Murillo, 2016). Similarly, Bilgihan et al. (2016) report that seamless integration significantly improves engagement and behavioral responses.

However, most mediation studies are concentrated within e-commerce and retail settings. Empirical investigations focusing on trust-intensive and high-risk property markets remain relatively scarce. This indicates a contextual research gap requiring structured examination within the real estate sector.

2.4 Phygital Strategies and Behavioral Outcomes in High-Value Property Decisions

Real estate purchase decisions are characterized by high financial risk, long-term commitment, and emotional significance (Levy & Lee, 2004). In such environments, experiential validation and credibility strongly influence purchase intention and decision confidence.

Digital transformation literature suggests that decision-support technologies—including AI-driven analytics, virtual simulations, and CRM automation—enhance perceived competence and transparency (Vial, 2019; Stone et al., 2020). Naeem et al. (2023) further argue that digital real estate ecosystems improve stakeholder coordination and information efficiency, yet emphasize that digital solutions must be integrated with physical processes to generate optimal outcomes.

Studies in emerging markets demonstrate that digitally integrated customer journeys positively influence brand credibility and behavioral responses (Sharma, 2022; Bansal et al., 2024). Nevertheless, comprehensive structural validation of how digital transformation-enabled phygital strategies influence purchase intention and decision confidence—particularly in Indian urban real estate contexts—remains underdeveloped.

2.5 Identified Research Gap

The review of literature reveals four critical gaps:

Limited integrative examination of digital immersion, omnichannel integration, and CRM personalization as unified phygital marketing dimensions in real estate.

Insufficient mediation analysis of customer experience and trust in high-involvement property purchase decisions.

Overconcentration of omnichannel and digital transformation research in retail and e-commerce sectors, with inadequate focus on trust-intensive real estate markets.

Lack of structured conceptual frameworks tailored to emerging economies such as India.

Addressing these gaps, the present study synthesizes secondary evidence to develop an integrated conceptual framework explaining the structural relationship between digital transformation-enabled phygital strategies, customer experience, trust, and behavioral outcomes in the urban real estate sector.

3. Research Methodology (Secondary Data)

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative secondary research design using a Systematic Literature Review and conceptual synthesis approach. The objective is to integrate existing empirical and theoretical evidence to develop a structured framework explaining the role of phygital marketing in Customer Experience Management (CEM) within the real estate sector. Unlike primary survey-based research, this study relies entirely on previously published peer-reviewed research, industry reports, and digital transformation frameworks to derive theoretical relationships.

3.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

Secondary data were collected from the following academic databases: Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink. Additionally, industry and consulting reports were reviewed from: McKinsey & Company, Deloitte Insights, JLL Real Estate Reports, Knight Frank India Reports, PwC Real Estate Outlook. Time Frame Covered: 2010–2025- This period was selected because it captures the accelerated digital transformation phase post-Industry 4.0 and post-pandemic digitization surge.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Studies were included if they: Were peer-reviewed journal articles or reputed industry reports, Focused on digital transformation, omnichannel marketing, or phygital strategies examined customer experience, trust, or behavioral outcomes addressed high-involvement purchase contexts were published between 2010–2025 were available in English.

Exclusion Criteria: Non-peer-reviewed blogs or opinion articles studies unrelated to customer experience purely technical IT infrastructure studies articles without conceptual or empirical relevance.

3.4 Study Selection Process

The study followed a three-stage screening process: Stage 1: Identification- Initial search yielded approximately 220–250 articles. Stage 2: Screening- After removing duplicates and irrelevant abstracts, approximately 120 articles remained. Stage 3: Eligibility- Full-text review resulted in 64 highly relevant studies being selected for detailed thematic analysis.

3.5. Data Extraction and Thematic Coding

Selected studies were systematically coded based on: Research focus, Industry context, Theoretical foundation key constructs examined identified

outcomes articles were grouped into five thematic clusters:

- i. Digital Transformation Frameworks
- ii. Phygital and Omnichannel Integration
- iii. CRM and Personalization Strategies
- iv. Customer Experience and Trust Mechanisms
- v. Behavioral Outcomes in High-Risk Purchases

3.6 Development of Conceptual Framework

The proposed framework is derived from secondary evidence rather than primary statistical testing. It integrates:

Independent Dimensions:

Digital Immersion

Omnichannel Integration

CRM Personalization

Mediating Constructs:

Customer Experience

Customer Trust

Outcome Variables:

Purchase Intention

Decision Confidence

3.7 Justification for Secondary Data Approach

The secondary research design is appropriate because: Phygital marketing is an emerging construct requiring conceptual consolidation. Literature remains fragmented across sectors. Real estate digital transformation studies are dispersed. The study aims to build an integrative framework rather than test localized behavioral responses. This approach allows theoretical generalization and structured framework development prior to empirical validation.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Hypothesis Testing

4.1 Thematic Classification of Reviewed Studies (n = 64)

The 64 studies were systematically coded and grouped into five major analytical themes:

Theme	No. of Studies	Key Focus
Digital Transformation in Real Estate	18	PropTech, AI, BIM, platformization
Phygital & Immersive Experience	14	AR/VR, virtual tours, metaverse
CRM & Customer Experience	12	CX, loyalty, trust, engagement
Omnichannel & Digital Engagement	10	Multi-channel integration
Technology Adoption & Trust Models	10	TAM, UTAUT, trust frameworks

5. Findings / Results

Based on the systematic review of 64 peer-reviewed studies and industry reports (2010–2025), the findings are synthesized in alignment with the research objectives and hypotheses.

5.1 Impact of Integrated Phygital Marketing on Customer Experience (H1)

The review indicates strong theoretical convergence that integrated phygital dimensions—digital

immersion (AR/VR, virtual tours), omnichannel integration, and CRM-driven personalization—positively influence Customer Experience Management (CEM). Studies grounded in digital transformation frameworks (e.g., Verhoef et al.) and CRM strategy literature (e.g., Payne & Frow) consistently report that seamless digital–physical integration enhances experiential continuity, perceived transparency, and personalization in high-involvement property decisions.

Result: H1 is supported; H01 is rejected.

5.2 Mediating Role of Customer Experience and Trust (H2)

Thematic evidence confirms that customer experience and trust act as critical mediating mechanisms between phygital strategies and behavioral outcomes. Trust literature (e.g., Gefen, Karahanna, & Straub) emphasizes transparency, system reliability, and personalization as key trust-building drivers in digital environments. Across multiple studies, the structural pathway Phygital Integration → Enhanced Experience → Trust Formation → Purchase Intention is consistently validated in high-risk purchase contexts.

Result: H2 is supported; H02 is rejected.

5.3 Effect on Behavioral Outcomes (H3)

Evidence from digital transformation research and real estate digitalization studies shows that integrated phygital strategies significantly improve purchase intention and decision confidence. Immersive technologies, synchronized touchpoints, and CRM automation reduce uncertainty and strengthen buyer commitment.

Result: H3 is supported; H03 is rejected.

Overall Structural Outcome- The synthesized findings validate the proposed conceptual framework: Digital Transformation → Phygital Marketing Dimensions → Customer Experience → Trust → Purchase Intention & Decision Confidence.

6. Conclusion and Implications

6.1 Conclusion

This study examined the role of digital transformation-enabled phygital marketing strategies in enhancing Customer Experience Management (CEM) within the urban real estate sector. Based on a systematic review of 64 peer-reviewed studies and industry reports (2010–2025), the findings confirm that integrated phygital dimensions—digital immersion, omnichannel integration, and CRM-driven personalization—collectively strengthen customer experience, foster trust, and positively influence purchase intention and decision confidence.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

Conceptual Integration: The study contributes by integrating digital immersion, omnichannel integration, and CRM personalization into a unified phygital framework tailored to the real estate sector. Mediation Validation: It strengthens theoretical understanding of customer experience and trust as mediating mechanisms linking digital transformation to behavioral outcomes in high-risk markets.

Contextual Extension: The research extends omnichannel and digital transformation theories—traditionally concentrated in retail and e-

commerce—to trust-intensive urban real estate markets in India.

6.3 Managerial Implications Strategic Integration Over Standalone Digitization:

Real estate firms should move beyond fragmented digital tools and adopt integrated phygital ecosystems aligning online platforms with offline interactions.

Investment in Immersive Technologies: AR/VR-enabled property visualization and interactive tools enhance experiential richness and reduce perceived risk.

CRM-Based Personalization: Data-driven follow-ups, predictive analytics, and transparent communication systems improve relationship continuity and buyer confidence.

Trust-Centric Digital Practices: Transparent documentation, real-time updates, and seamless omnichannel communication are critical for building long-term credibility in high-value transactions.

6.4 Future Research Directions

The conceptual framework developed through secondary synthesis provides a foundation for future empirical validation using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) in metropolitan real estate markets. Further studies may also explore comparative analysis across emerging and developed economies.

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